



**United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Wildlife Enhancement Activity - Managing Riparian Zones for Fish and Wildlife

Conservation and Management of Riparian Zones for Fish and Wildlife. Intact riparian zones with a natural and diverse mix of herbaceous and woody vegetation of different ages are havens for wildlife and sources of food and wood for fish.

Benefits:

Sound management of riparian areas protects habitat for both fish and wildlife and also improves water quality. Implementation of targeted conservation measures can protect fish and wildlife habitat in riparian zones of rivers, streams, isolated wetlands, ponds, floodplain wetlands, and lakes. Species such as ground-nesting birds, neotropical migrants, fish, amphibians, bats, turtles, pollinators, and other species of concern will benefit from riparian zone management that enhances food, habitat and water quality.

Criteria for Managing Riparian Zones for Fish and Wildlife:

The producer must implement and maintain management actions specifically for improving or protecting natural riparian zones and their functions associated with fish and wildlife habitat. Forested riparian areas must be managed to sustain a diversity of tree, shrub, and herbaceous species, provide snags for wildlife, recruit wood to the stream channel, provide shade to the stream corridor, and maintain stable banks. Herbaceous riparian areas must be managed to maintain stable banks, provide overhanging vegetation and hiding cover, and protect water quality.

- Select management scenarios to benefit the life history needs of species of concern
- Time grazing regimes to accommodate seasonal and life history needs of both terrestrial and aquatic species
- Establish fencing to protect sensitive or recovering riparian vegetation, stream banks, and water quality
- Manage for a diversity of fish and wildlife species dependent on riparian zones
- Manage trees, snags and down trees to benefit both terrestrial and aquatic species habitat
- Remove farm equipment and associated activities out of riparian zones

Any use of the riparian zone must be managed to protect fish and wildlife habitat. Practice criteria and applicable considerations for fish and wildlife must be applied. Practices appropriate for this enhancement include the following: Fence (Code 382), Prescribed Grazing (Code 528), Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (Code 395), Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 644), Use Exclusion (Code 472), Prescribed Forestry (Code 409) and Forest Stand Improvement (Code 666).



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Operation and Maintenance:

Manage forested riparian areas to sustain a diversity of tree, shrub, and herbaceous species, provide snags for wildlife, recruit wood to the stream channel, provide shade to the stream corridor, and maintain stable banks. Structures and acres will be maintained as prescribed under the practice used. Up to 2 structures per acre of riparian habitat may be installed. This enhancement is limited to 10 structures per contract or all acres of riparian habitat in the enrolled property.

References:

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